

David Braten:

Of Blue-Ribbon Panels

There has been a good deal of inexact folk wisdom tossed around concerning the make-up of the blue-ribbon panel named to investigate importations attributed to the Central Intelligence Agency.

"Like putting a goat to guard the cabbage patch," say some. "Or a fox to guard the chicken coop," say others.

Considering the back-grounds of the commission members, it seems more likely that President Ford has set out a cabbage patch to investigate the goat, or a henhouse full of banty roosters to investigate Brer Fox. This may be of concern only to folklore purists; of course, the results in either case will be indistinguishable.

What's pretty certain, though, is that when Vice President Rockefeller, the commission chairman, said, "Probably nobody knows the workings of the CIA better than I do," it touched off chor-

ties and guffaws in the ole Langley briar patch unmatched this side of Uncle Remus.

If there's anything that delights a professional, it's to be told that a know-it-all amateur is going to be checking on his every move.

In this situation, everyone agrees, the choice of an executive director for the commission is crucial. Tiger or pussycat, which will he be?

We must assume that Rocky, with his extensive CIA expertise, is giving the selection a lot of thought. We must also assume that the CIA is, too, with results that are only too easy to imagine.

The chauffeur parks the official commission limousine at National Airport, checks the password linked on his wrist one last time, goes to a pay phone and dials the chairman's unlisted number. "Tell Uncle Milite I'm going to pick up Zorba now. Give my love to Mama."

The flight from Florida disgorges its passengers, and the chauffeur sidles up to one after another, murmuring, "Hiya, fella."

An old lady in a black veil belts him on the cosh with her reticule. A bearded gentleman with a monocle shouts, "Unhand me, sirrah!" And a swarthy Slav in black cape and wide-brimmed sombrero flashes a broad, stainless-steel grin of welcome — but can't come up with the right counterword.

Finally, the chauffeur spots a bulbous-nosed man in baggy pants, dark glasses and an ill-fitting red wig, leading a duck on a leash. "Hiya, fella," the chauffeur mumbles, and the man replies in a weird falsetto: "Zzzzztt zzzzzetttt!" "Zzztt zz zzzetttt?" says the chauffeur. "For Peje's sake, take the kazoo out of your mouth, will you? Now, Zorba, remove the voice modifier and says, "Thanks a

thon." They exchange secret handshakes and Zorba snaps: "Let's go. Got no time to waste." He falls over the old lady at the baggage counter, and she screams for the police. Taking off his shades, Zorba exits quickly, followed by the chauffeur and the duck. "You got any plans, Zorb?" the chauffeur asks on the way into town.

"Plenty," says the executive director. "As I see it, first we recruit a totally loyal, dedicated, crack investigative team. I've already lined up some top men in Miami. Then we open a training camp in Guatemala, stockpile a few hundred bulldozers, and —"

"Wait a minute," says the chauffeur. "What do we need bulldozers for?"

"Ransom, dummy!" says Zorba. "If Ford finds out about the takeover, you don't want to spend the rest of your life in Fort Holabird, do you?"